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Working Group on Organization, Content and Methodology of Household Surveys

Addis Ababa, 29 June - 3 July 1981

REPORT OF THE MEETING

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A. ATTENDANCE AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Opening and duration of the meeting

1. The meeting of the Working Group on Organization, Content and Methodology of Household Surveys was held at ECA Headquarters, Addis Ababa, from 29 June to 3 July 1981. The meeting was opened by the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

Attendance

2. The meeting was attended by twenty-three experts from the following countries invited in their individual capacities: Algeria, Botswana, Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Sudan, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

3. The following agencies were represented: the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). A representative of the United Nations Statistical Office was also present. Observers from Canada, Sweden, United Kingdom and the United States of America also attended the meeting.

Election of officers

4. Mr. Mitik Deyene (Ethiopia) was elected Chairman of the meeting with Mr. C. Mierassa (Congo) as Vice-Chairman and Mr. E.O. Tawiah (Ghana) as Rapporteur.

B. AGENDA

5. The meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening address
2. Election of officers
3. Adoption of agenda and other organizational matters
4. Progress report on AHSCP
5. Development of integrated programmes of surveys: General, technical and organizational problems
6. Food production/agricultural surveys
7. Labour force surveys
8. Income-expenditure surveys
9. Survey designs
10. Non-sampling errors
11. Analysis of survey data
12. Technical and financial assistance
13. Future work programme
14. Other business
15. Adoption of report
16. Closing.

C. ACCOUNT OF PROCEEDINGS

Opening address

6. In his remarks, the ECA Deputy Executive Secretary expressed great pleasure in opening the meeting. He recalled that when in 1979 the ECA Executive Secretary addressed the last such meeting, he referred to lack of up-to-date and comprehensive data for planning purposes in the region and indicated that the African Household Survey Capability Programme (AHSCP) should be able to correct this deficiency. At that meeting, the Executive Secretary also requested that efforts should be made to influence national Governments to make commitments to the programme.

7. The Deputy Executive Secretary then stated that during the past two years, fourteen countries had enrolled in the AHSCP. Complete project proposals had been prepared for nine of them. Efforts to mobilise technical and financial resources to implement national programmes were underway. In this connexion, he stated that while waiting for external assistance to be provided, at least two countries in the region had with their own resources made a bold attempt to implement their programmes.

8. In connexion with the work programmes for the regional component of the AHSCP recommended by the last Working Group, the Deputy Executive Secretary indicated that ECA had tried to implement it. A number of advisory missions had been undertaken and methodological studies had also been initiated. Reports on these would be considered at the Working Group meeting and also at the seminar on household surveys funded by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany scheduled to be held in Addis Ababa from 21 to 30 September 1981.

9. The Deputy Executive Secretary identified two problems which had been encountered in the efforts to implement national programmes: financing and data processing. With respect to the latter, he indicated that the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany had provided funds for a household survey data processing adviser for 1981 and 1982 and the search for a suitable candidate was underway.

10. Finally, he stressed that there was the need to consider the subject of utilization of survey data. The next Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers scheduled to be convened in Addis Ababa in March 1982 should provide a forum for this discussion.

D. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE AFRICAN HOUSEHOLD SURVEY CAPABILITY PROGRAMME (AHSCP)

11. The secretariat introduced the AHSCP progress report contained in document E/CN.14/SM/31. The report was based primarily on how far the programme of work formulated by the Working Group had been implemented. Two serious bottlenecks in national programme implementation were identified: data processing and training. These were in addition to the problem of mobilising technical and financial resources.

12. In the discussion which followed, the participants from Algeria, Botswana, Morocco and the United Republic of Cameroon up-dated the information in document E/CN.14/SM/31 as far as their respective countries are concerned.

13. Several issues relating to the work programme recommended at the 1979 Working Group meeting - financing of survey projects, incomplete exchange of information between countries participating in the African Household Survey Capability Programme (AHSCP) on the one hand and the Central Co-ordinating Unit of the National Household Survey Capability Programme (NHSCP) on the other and the priority attached to survey programmes - were discussed.

14. With respect to the recommendations of the 1979 Working Group on Organization, Content and Methodology of Household Surveys, some participants wanted to know whether there had been any progress in developing survey methodology by the regional component of the AHSCP. In reply, a representative of the secretariat referred to sections of the document in which reference had been made to the development of an illustrative questionnaire, concepts, definitions and classifications and an illustrative tabulation programme in respect of labour force surveys. Similar activities in respect of other subject fields were in progress and the results would be presented to the seminar on household surveys scheduled to be convened in Addis Ababa from 21 to 30 September 1981, with funds provided by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. It was also noted that the UN Statistical Office was developing a number of technical studies in the context of the NHSCP. These include, in addition to the draft handbook on household surveys, studies on integration, sampling, data processing, training and non-sampling errors.

15. The question of financing of survey projects was only discussed briefly at this stage, in view of the fuller discussion expected under agenda item 12. It was however stressed that ECA should evolve a system for accelerating procedures for the mobilisation of external resources for the implementation of national survey projects.

16. Related to the problem of financing is the question of the priority accorded by Governments in negotiating for external assistance in respect of survey projects. Since this had usually to be decided within the normal aid programmes with bilateral donors, there was in certain cases a reluctance by Governments to ensure that the household survey programmes are accorded the necessary priority in relation to other projects.

17. The problems caused by incomplete exchange of information between participating countries and the United Nations usually result in slow follow-up of requests submitted by participating countries. There was thus the need for all parties involved in the NHSCP to keep each other informed of progress being made in the mobilisation of resources and in the implementation of the survey projects.

18. It was emphasised in the introductory statement by the representative of the secretariat and by several participants that lack of capable data processing personnel had hindered processing of information in good time for data users. This problem would be a serious bottleneck in the implementation of the envisaged national surveys projects. The provision by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany of a data processing adviser attached to the regional component of AFSCP should go a long way towards improving the situation. It was however pointed out by some participants that the mere provision of a regional data processing adviser would not change the situation a lot unless there was an increase in computer capacity in some countries and an increase of national personnel capable of using the computer. In this connexion, ECA was requested to consider sponsoring subject-matter specialists for short-term courses which would enable them to use standard software packages. Such an approach would help countries of the region to deal with the problem caused by the high turn over in data processing personnel.

19. The representative of the UN Statistical Office recommended the following steps to curtail the dependence on computers: shift of some work such as editing to manual processing, appropriate sampling sizes to avoid unnecessarily large samples and preparation of manual summaries.

20. Finally there was a proposal that countries which have already enrolled in the AFSCP should exchange information with those about to do so.

E. DEVELOPMENT OF INTEGRATED PROGRAMMES OF SURVEYS: GENERAL, TECHNICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS

21. In presenting document E/CN.14/SM/41, the secretariat summarized the main general, technical and organizational problems connected with the development of integrated programmes of surveys in Africa. The general problems usually encountered are the location of the survey organization, co-ordination, survey programming, provision of adequate budget and resource mobilization. Under technical problems the following were mentioned: sample design, concepts, definitions and classifications, non-sampling errors and the inter-linking of survey results. Finally the representative of the secretariat introduced briefly the organizational problems. These covered staff requirements including the question of permanent vs. temporary field staff, equipment, analysis and publication.

22. The Working Group then discussed the points raised in the presentation. Several participants referred to the role of a co-ordinating committee and the need to make it function efficiently. However it was felt that a proliferation of committees connected with statistical development would not in the long run be in the best interest of the survey programme. There was thus the need for one central statistical committee with sub-committees wherever necessary to oversee all statistical operations. Examples were given from different countries of the types of committees which had been set up in connexion with the population census and other statistical activities and how these had functioned.

23. With respect to field staff it was mentioned that the fluctuations in the numbers of interviewers and supervisors required for different surveys would make it difficult to determine the size of the permanent field staff. It was noted that the permanent field staff tended to lack motivation and were more likely to know techniques for falsifying results. It was also felt that a permanent field staff might not be ideal for collecting information on conditions of health, nutrition and related fields. In this connexion the secretariat explained that in the project proposals formulated so far provision had been made for a core of permanent field staff which could be supplemented by temporary staff whenever the particular survey required more staff.

24. The next question examined by the Working Group was the relationship of agricultural and non-agricultural surveys in the context of the implementation of the National Household Survey Capability Programme. The problem of a different organization other than the Central Statistical Office having responsibility for agricultural surveys made it difficult in some countries for agricultural and non-agricultural surveys to be merged especially as some of these agricultural surveys did not use the household as the unit of inquiry.

25. In reply to suggestions by some members of the Working Group, the Secretariat explained that integration of demographic, social and economic data from different survey rounds could be achieved through (a) the use of the core questionnaire which will be common to all survey rounds, (b) a core survey as in Kenya for the 1975-79 survey programme and (c) common sampling units. The representative of the UN Statistical Office added that integration could be achieved at four levels namely: institutional, organizational, operational and conceptual. Participants considered that integration was desirable and that one of the ways of achieving it is through the use of the core questionnaire. The question of integration of sources of funding for the household programme was also discussed at length. It was stated that obtaining funds from different sources sometimes made integration very difficult but the secretariat explained that this need not be so. Some donors such as UNFPA have well defined mandates for working in specified fields and thus would not be in the position to fund an entire survey programme. However they can finance clearly identifiable components of it. Taking this into account, Governments can obtain funds from different sources and still formulate and implement an integrated survey programme.

26. A participant requested that to enable countries to identify priority subject fields ECA should provide assistance in this area.

27. With respect to the use of master samples it was emphasised that this is a powerful tool for the implementation of the household survey programme. There was some reservation from some participants who considered that different subject-fields would require different samples and these could not always be accommodated within the master-sampling scheme.

28. In examining steps which could be taken to ensure the timely publication of household survey results, it was suggested that the statistical office should aim at publishing only priority tables in the first instance. Too ambitious a tabulation and publication programme could lead to a long delay before the release of survey results.

F. FOOD PRODUCTION/AGRICULTURAL SURVEYS

29. The FAO document E/CN.14/SM/36 was presented by the secretariat. It discussed the need for collecting food and agricultural statistics with references to recommendations of international bodies. A list of items and some basic concepts and definitions relating to food and agriculture which can be collected through household surveys were given as well as the different sources of data on agriculture. The usefulness of food and agricultural statistical information for planning purposes can hardly be over-emphasized especially since in developing countries the majority of the population derives its livelihood from agriculture. The Group based its comments on experiences in their individual countries and mentioned the difficulties and obstacles encountered in the implementation of some of the ideas contained in the paper.

30. The paper also examined the different relations that exist and the problems that arise in establishing the relationship between an agricultural holding and a household. Participants were informed that different basic units of enumeration - holding, household, dwelling - have been employed in the collection of information in agricultural surveys in some parts of Africa. The holding had been approached through households in some countries.

31. The discussion centered mainly on country experiences and the difficulties and obstacles encountered in the implementation of some of the ideas contained in the paper. On the relationship between household and holding, many and varied instances were cited. It was pointed out that there was one to one correspondence between a holding and a household in some countries; the situation might be different in other countries. Various ways in which such situations could be dealt with in order to arrive at a satisfactory accounting of all households and their related holdings were suggested. For instance, in household surveys in which the basic units as listed refer to only part of households (dwellings), care should be taken to identify the complete household such that the entire related holding may be accounted for. Similarly, suitable sampling procedures will be needed when more than one household share the same holding. Large farming enterprises may best be surveyed separately rather than through households.

32. There was considerable discussion about the problem of integration particularly in countries where conduct of agricultural surveys does not come under the purview of the National Statistical Office. In the light of the above consideration it was suggested that co-ordination between the National Statistical Office and the Agricultural Agency should be strengthened. Statisticians should endeavour to educate those concerned on the usefulness and benefits to be derived from integration of their activities.

33. Kenya's experience in collecting information on agriculture was highlighted. It was pointed out that there had been a shift in using agricultural surveys as the core every year. Kenya now adopts a specific core relating to a different subject-matter every year and modules are attached to the core.

34. Regarding measurements of areas and yields it was noted that the trend was for countries to use the much cheaper subjective methods. However, the reliability of the estimates could be improved by supplementing the methods with objective measurement over a sub-sample.

G. LABOUR FORCE SURVEYS

35. In presenting the three papers (E/CN.14/SM/32, 33, 34) the secretariat briefly traced the history of labour force surveys and the international recommendations pertaining to them. Taking note of the fact that labour force surveys are fast becoming popular in the African continent and in the light of deliberations of the last Working Group Meeting, the secretariat has prepared practical details of sample design, approach, schedules and questionnaires and tabulation plans in the three papers. It was pointed out that these details were illustrative at this stage and much work, experimentation and field-testing remained to be done on them. The secretariat requested the countries to take up at least some pilot surveys from which it can have the necessary feed-back. The pilot survey would afford the opportunity to test various parts of the new approach.

36. The important points in paper no. E/CN.14/SM/32 regarding the survey design and approach were recounted in relation to in-depth labour force surveys. In particular, the concepts of activity, economic activity, list of activities, availability for work, multiple activity classification and building block approach were elaborated. The main points were summarized as follows:

(i) Economic activity is to be considered in relation to all other associated activities and not in isolation. A multiple activity approach is, therefore, preferable.

(ii) The concept of economic activity needs to be extended to "non-market activities" in the case of work and "availability of work" in the case of seeking work.

(iii) A properly formulated list of activities will improve the quality of primary data.

(iv) Field collection of data should avoid as far as possible complicated definitional and categorization problems where enumerators have to use their judgement or discretion.

(v) Disaggregation should be the keynote in tabulation and presentation of data to widen analytical options.

(vi) The building block approach gives flexibility to analysis of data and permits measurement of employment, under-employment and unemployment under varying conditions.

37. The secretariat explained that following the above approach, outlines of schedules and questionnaires have been presented in paper no. E/CN.14/SM/33. Apart from labour force particulars, core variables have also been covered in these schedules and questionnaires.

38. In paper no. E/CN.14/SM/34, the secretariat presented a set of dummy tables which can be derived from the type of labour force survey discussed. These are illustrative of the approach presented in the first paper and complementary to the schedules and questionnaires presented in the second paper. The various considerations which have gone into the design of the tables were elaborated. In particular it was pointed out that full use has been made of the core variables in the proposed tables along with analysis of the labour force data.

39. In the ensuing discussions, participants commended the new approach although it was pointed out that the schedules and questionnaires were quite lengthy and it would be difficult for enumerators to cover three households per day. It was explained by the secretariat that the norms of work-load for enumerators were based on the experience of a pilot survey conducted in Malawi but this and the content of schedules should be tested in each country in the light of specific conditions prevailing there. Some participants also felt that the activity list was too long. The secretariat explained that the list was flexible and could be adapted to the requirements of each country.

40. As regards minimum sample size, an opinion was expressed that the sample size might be too small. It was also suggested that in order to allow for non-response and drop-outs it would be desirable to start with a larger sample. The secretariat explained that with complete replacement of the sample from quarter to quarter, the sample size for annual estimates would be four times the number of households in any quarter. However, if the same households are kept for all the quarters the effective sample size could be substantially smaller. The secretariat also emphasized that in complex samples, practical and cost considerations necessarily limit the size of the sample feasible in most circumstances. Points were also raised about allowances for clustering effect and the merits and demerits of using a fixed sampling fraction for selection of households. The secretariat explained that these problems would be discussed in connexion with a paper on sampling design which was to come up before the meeting later.

41. There was some discussion about the reference period. The secretariat explained that the suggestion was to have a moving reference period spread over one full year to take into account seasonality. The reference period was the same for both work and looking for work because the data were proposed to be collected according to a common list of activities which covered both. It was suggested that different reference periods should be tested in pilot surveys. The secretariat mentioned that this could be done but there was already enough evidence that a reference period of a week was the best for the current status approach.

42. The desirability of collecting income data not only for paid employees but for other categories of working population as well was emphasized. The secretariat discussed the practical difficulties in collecting data on income-content of work where the income resulted from joint work of several members of the household including unpaid family workers. In view of this difficulty, the procedure suggested was to collect data on total household income and tabulate the labour force details by per capita household income.

43. A point was made that the secretariat should try to evolve standards for measurement of under-employment and unemployment. The secretariat explained that the present papers did not go fully into the analysis of data. This would be the next step in developing the methodology for labour force surveys. In the meantime, the secretariat needed realistic data from countries even on the basis of pilot surveys. It was also mentioned by the secretariat that full results of labour force surveys conducted in some countries were likely to be available soon and those would be useful for further work to be done by the secretariat.

44. It was suggested that issues relating to sample size and design should be considered in general, taking into account the context of integrated survey programmes. Individual countries might have different focus in their labour force surveys, like activities of women and children or similar special problems.

H. INCOME-EXPENDITURE SURVEYS

45. In introducing the paper (E/CN.14/SM/35), made available by the United Nations Statistical Office, the secretariat pointed out that the discussions in the paper were in the global context taking into account national practices all over the world and hence one should not expect to find a sharp focus on problems which arise specially in the African context. However, there were many parallels from which useful inferences could be drawn. The main points in the paper were presented by the secretariat section by section with comments highlighting African practices and situations. Some of the important points covered by the secretariat were as follows:

(i) Collection of detailed information for each individual on each income and expenditure item is the ideal procedure but in practice this can be done for a few items only.

(ii) It is necessary to integrate all the factors e.g. recall period, reference period, data collection procedure, possible non-sampling errors, sample size, sample design, cost, precision, organisation, etc., into one optimum framework.

(iii) Differences in concepts and definitions among System of National Accounts (SNA), United Nations Guidelines and the recommendations of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians followed by the ILO do not matter if the data are presented with enough disaggregation so that it is possible to reconstruct the data according to any chosen definition.

(iv) Suggestions regarding valuation of income in kind including imputation of rent for owner-occupied dwellings centrally in the Statistical Office after data collection may involve practical difficulties. The usual practice in African countries is to make the valuation in the field according to procedures laid down for the purpose.

(v) Comparison of aggregate income with aggregate expenditure for evaluating the data should be done for individual households and in the field. Techniques and procedures for quality control in the field are extremely important.

(vi) A common complaint that income data collected in household surveys are generally unreliable needs to be tested in the African conditions.

46. Several participants pointed out that it was extremely difficult to collect reliable income data and hence the survey should be restricted to consumption and expenditure only. Experience from a few African countries which have tried to collect income data seems to indicate that respondents were more willing to give information on consumption and expenditure. The secretariat recognized that collection of income data was more difficult than collection of expenditure data but unless income data were recorded, however imperfectly, an important consistency check based on a comparison of income and expenditure for individual households would be missing. Moreover, in many countries household surveys were the only means to collect income data. Therefore, inspite of difficulties it was still worth recording income data. The secretariat was requested to examine ways of collecting reliable information on consumption particularly from women respondents who do not have a fair idea about household budgets.

47. Some of the participants raised points about practicability of stratification by income. The secretariat pointed out that stratification was meant for increasing the efficiency of the sample and for that purpose even rough data on income would serve the purpose. The question of using other variables, e.g. household size, occupation of the head, etc., was also raised and a view was expressed that the problems of stratification should be considered in the overall context of an integrated design for all kinds of surveys. Participants agreed that ECA should encourage exchange of information on country experience among countries in the region.

48. Several practical problems of data collection were raised in regard to rent, home-grown produce consumed, retrospective data on expenditure for periods 3 to 6 months in the past, etc. A suggestion was made that the secretariat should look into the practices followed by African countries in some of the recent surveys. It was also mentioned that some of the countries had arrangements for bilateral co-operation and exchange of information in the conduct of income consumption and expenditure surveys. The secretariat agreed to follow up these suggestions.

49. A view was expressed that every single member of the household should be interviewed for collecting the income and expenditure data. It was pointed out that though this was desirable, it could not be fully implemented in practice.

50. Several participants expressed dissatisfaction about the paper since it did not focus attention on problems in the African context. It was pointed out that the examples cited in the paper were not properly evaluated. It was desired that the secretariat should adapt the draft document to suit African conditions.

I. SURVEY DESIGNS

51. The paper (E/CN.14/SM/37) dealing with survey designs of Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia and Kenya which are some of the African countries participating in the AHSCP was presented by the secretariat. It discusses the salient features of different sampling designs adopted by the four countries in respect of stratifications, master sample, sample selection and size, interlinkage, self-weighting and non-self-weighting designs, etc. It was pointed out that integration of data was possible but the manner and level of integration would depend on many factors such as common core items, concepts, definitions, sample design, common units, non-sampling errors, capability in data processing and analysis.

52. In the ensuing discussion the delegates of Kenya, Botswana and Ethiopia updated the information on the sample design for their respective countries.

53. On the question of sample design in general, the following points were noted:

(i) Under certain circumstances, the clustering of sampling units reduces cost and non-sampling errors, by concentrating the field teams in a few areas.

(ii) Rotating samples should be used to control non-sampling errors due to respondents' fatigue.

(iii) The advantages and disadvantages of self-weighting designs were highlighted.

(iv) ECA was requested to prepare guidelines on various sampling designs which may be applicable to the implementations of the AHSCP.

J. NON-SAMPLING ERRORS

54. The paper, E/CN.14/SM/38, presented by the secretariat is based on the experience of an African country in an income and expenditure survey carried out recently or one year. It discusses the errors pertaining to the frame, coverage, content, editing and data processing. It was recommended that survey planners should prepare reliable sampling frames, give thorough training to the field staff, edit and correct errors in the field based on summary tables, draw a sub-sample to study errors and to conduct pilot and post-enumeration surveys. It was noted that more work on non-sampling errors would need to be undertaken. It was further discussed that efforts should be made to present non-sampling errors in addition to sampling errors in order to give an overview of total survey error.

K. ANALYSIS OF SURVEY DATA

55. The secretariat presented document E/CN.14/SM/39 which attempted to identify the kinds of survey data analysis likely to be needed, examine the use of survey data bases for analytical and other purposes and make proposals for the interlinking of survey data.

56. The Group emphasized the need for continuing collaboration between data producers and users throughout survey operations. At the planning stage of any survey it is necessary to have a clear idea of analytical requirements so that they can be taken fully into account in the survey design and assist in identifying core variables. Similarly at the analytical stage collaboration must continue if effective results are to be achieved.

57. It was noted that there are difficulties in establishing satisfactory relationships between producers and users of data because planners and other users are often not very clear about their requirements. In this situation it is often necessary for statisticians to foresee data requirements as best they can. Nevertheless improvements can be effected through the use of inter-ministerial committees.

58. On the question of responsibility for data analysis the Group felt that both statisticians and data users should participate and also that universities and research institutions had an important role to play.

59. A participant from Kenya described his country's procedure for dealing with survey results as follows: (i) publication of a basic survey report with tables and explanatory notes; (ii) more detailed analysis by the university, etc. and (iii) presentation of the main conclusions in a social perspectives publication (developed with UNICEF's financial assistance) for policy-makers and general use. Another participant from Nigeria reported the establishment of a Research and Statistical Standards Unit which would be concerned with sample design and also contribute to analysis. A reservation was expressed about the extent to which national statistical offices should participate in analysis leading to policy conclusions.

60. In general it was felt that survey programmes must be regarded as fully integrated operations. While a simple time series approach can help in monitoring development efforts, it is only through integrated surveys that it is possible to examine the determinants of current structure, trends, etc.

61. The Group recognized that the interlinking of survey data is a complex problem in which experience still has to be gained. Over short periods, say one year, when various inquiries can be directed to the same sample of households, the matching of records for individual households was recommended as the best approach in establishing inter-relationships. For longer periods when the households in the sample has changed it was suggested that variables be created at the level of penultimate-stage units. The data involved would be of a hierarchical nature, i.e. derived from both community and household records, and might enable useful analysis.

62. Several references were made to the need for care in selecting appropriate core variables and it appears that efforts are being made to include them in African surveys.

63. It was observed that the secretariat's paper should be elaborated by mentioning various techniques for exploring data structures. It was agreed that the necessary reference and explanatory material would be compiled.

64. It was agreed also that a data base approach is necessary for integrated survey programmes. The need for feasibility in the arrangements was stressed to enable the creation of interlinked files at a later stage. In addition there should be an exhaustive data dictionary for each survey file and it should preferably be published in the basic survey report to facilitate requests by users. In addition to their analytical uses, survey data bases were expected to become an important means of storing and disseminating information.

65. A request was made for more detailed information on survey data evaluation and on the means of calculating sampling errors, etc. from the material stored in a data base. It was also pointed out that provision has to be made for tabulating data for sub-national geographical areas as well as the entire country.

66. Although the suggestions made in the secretariat's report were generally considered acceptable, it was pointed out that analytical work requires time for careful thought and many statisticians are fully occupied with day-to-day tasks. It was suggested that training should be provided for both statisticians and users in the presentation, interpretation and analysis of data. However such training could be organized more effectively after some practical experience has been gained in a few countries of the region. Reference was made to the need for survey statisticians to have some knowledge of conceptual frameworks such as national accounts and those being developed in the social field. It was emphasized that data analysis should be reduced to a form understandable to users.

L. TECHNICAL AND FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

67. Paper E/CN.14/SM/40 was briefly summarized. The secretariat reviewed the current status of direct assistance to countries under AHSCP, and the regional supporting component at ECA. It was noted that in the region, nine countries project proposals had been prepared and approved by the Governments concerned. Of these four appearsd to have reached a more or less viable financial status; in one case the Government was finding it difficult to include the proposal in the country aid programme; in three it was too early to indicate the prospects; while in one case, prospects for funding appeared poor. In most cases, funding was expected from a variety of sources, rather than from a single donor and hence the implementation and integration of financial assistance by a country could itself be a major problem.

68. Regarding the regional supporting component, it was reported that apart from the regular budget staff of the Division, two survey experts financed by UNDP, one by ILO, one part-time by FAO, and one by FRG were available for AHSCP work. However, concern was expressed at the fact that in the next UNDP programming cycle (1982-86), a number of projects at ECA were competing for available funds, so that the continuation of the UNDP-financed part of the AHSCP supporting component could not be taken as merely automatic.

69. Some participants felt that the document under discussion had perhaps givern too optimistic a picture of the financial support which countries may expect under AHSCP. Participants were of the view that conditions attached to aid were not favourable to countries. It was also noted that the introduction of the project in regular country aid programmes was dependent on a number of factors beyond the control of national statistical offices. Long delays, including those due to difficulties in formulating effective project proposals specially by countries, were also a major problem. Concern was also expressed regarding situations in which a country received only a part of the required financial assistance and was unable to continue the programme after investing considerable national resources. In the light of the above consideration it was suggested that local statisticians should make more personal contacts with local donor offices. It was noted that even in the case of countries where external assistance formed a relatively minor proportion of the total costs, that assistance was very crucial to the successful implementation of the programme.

70. Several participants emphasized the usefulness of creating a pool of funds on which countries could draw to initiate the programmes. The secretariat responded that the issue of centralized funds had been discussed previously, but had not found favour with donors. Furthermore, the CCU had recently made a more limited proposal for such a fund, the answer to which was also negative.

71. There was a considerable discussion of the procedure currently being followed by the CCU and ECA in promoting and co-ordinating efforts to secure financial support for country programmes. Generally, the meeting agreed that the existing procedures were the best available, and no suggestions for any changes were made.

72. The participants expressed strong support for the continuation of the regional supporting component at ECA and requested more information on the basis of which they could try to exert effective influence in this respect.

73. One participant strongly felt that to be effective, technical assistance missions from ECA had to be of considerably longer durations than was usually the case presently. The secretariat pointed out that this was generally not possible, given the limited resources available and large number of countries needing assistance in the region; however, special requirements of particular countries could be discussed further outside the meeting. A number of other participants felt that short advisory missions were quite adequate.

74. Several participants felt that an additional way of organising technical assistance effectively was to support exchange-visits between countries in the region. This was specially important in the context of different levels of statistical development among countries. The secretariat noted that the last Conference of African Statisticians had examined this issue, and ECA had prepared a directory of persons available for such assistance. The problem, however, had been finance. The UNICEF observer noted that from the outset of its social statistics programme, UNICEF had supported such exchanges between countries. Countries may wish to approach UNICEF country offices for support in this regard.

75. Needs and arrangements for training were discussed at some length. The meeting emphasized that adequate training, particularly at the professional level, was the key to the development of self-reliant capability for conducting sample surveys. Particular emphasis was put on training on survey methodology and management. Some participants requested the ECA to compile more information on the training facilities and resources available within and outside the region.

76. The CDA (UK) observer expressed support for AHSCP, and satisfaction at the fact that the CCU has been forwarding country project proposals to ODA on an informal basis. He emphasized that any assistance could only come from the regular bilateral aid programmes. Further, countries may wish to set their survey programmes within the context of their total statistical development programmes, so that requirements for new assistance could be distinguished from those merely involving reallocation of funds from other programmes to the household survey programme. The observer also appreciated the increased emphasis on resident technical experts in country project proposals.

77. The US observer reported on the Census Bureau's plans in support of NHSCP, specifically the training documents and workshops on household surveys being organized. The Group commended the efforts being made by the US Bureau of the Census to strengthen survey capabilities in the region. The secretariat noted that most countries would wish to make full use of these facilities.

M. FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

78. The Group recommended the following work programme for the regional component of AHSCP. In doing so, it specially took note of the assistance given by the United States Bureau of the Census with respect to training workshops.

79. The programme of work approved took into account recommendations made at the two working group meetings on organization, content and methodology of household surveys (15-19 October 1979 and 29 June to 3 July 1981) as well as proposals made by the first session of the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers. The work programme is divided into five parts: project proposals formulation missions, technical advisory missions development of methodology, training including working groups and co-ordination.

(a) Project proposals formulation missions

80. It is expected that by the end of 1983, 14 additional African countries would be enrolled in the AHSCP. Thus, in collaboration with the UN Statistical Office and specialized agencies, project proposals will be formulated for the mobilization of technical and financial assistance in respect of these countries.

(b) Technical advisory and review missions

81. (i) Technical advice in the fields of survey organization, sampling, data processing, data analysis and data utilization will be provided to African countries which have or are intending to establish active survey operations.

(ii) Review, documentation and dissemination of country experiences.

(c) Development of methodology

82. The development of methodology for the collection, processing, analysis and utilization of integrated demographic, social and economic data already begun will be continued. This will take into account technical studies being undertaken by the UN Statistical Office and UN specialized agencies. Specifically the following will be done:

(i) Preparation of guidelines for the measurement of employment, under-employment and unemployment after testing technical plans for labour force surveys;

(ii) Development of technical plans for income, consumption and expenditure surveys, taking into account the special conditions of Africa;

(iii) Examination of technical problems associated with agricultural surveys;

(iv) Development of guidelines on report writing and dissemination of data

(v) Examination of sampling problems relating to construction of sampling frames and master samples for integrated surveys and preparation of relevant guidelines;

(vi) Continued development of illustrative questionnaires, adaptation of concepts, definitions and classifications and preparation of relevant illustrative tabulation programmes;

(vii) Development of household data analysis. The work will be concerned with the analysis of data from individual subject-fields for which no suitable or comprehensive guidelines are available and the examination of the inter-relationship of core and main subject-field variables. It will take into account data made available from the new surveys;

(viii) Development or adaptation of data processing procedures for the support of survey programme, including the formulation of appropriate guidelines for data base activities involving survey data. This work may involve the development and adaptation of software packages.

(d) Training

83. The briefing of survey directors at the biennial working groups will be included here for convenience. Thus training activities will comprise:

(i) Working Group on Organization, Content and Methodology of Household Surveys (1983), to which survey directors will be invited in their individual capacities. Funding for this meeting has not yet been assured;

(ii) Training of survey personnel of all levels in collaboration with the Statistical Training Programme for Africa (STPA). This will involve the organization of training workshops at STPA centres. This will be done in collaboration with the UN Statistical Office, the UN specialized agencies, the associate centres of STPA and multilateral as well as bilateral donors;

(iii) Inclusion of survey techniques in training at under-graduate and similar levels;

(iv) In-service training at national level;

(v) Assistance in the organization of exchange visits.

(e) Co-ordination of multilateral and bilateral assistance to countries

84. In collaboration with the Central Co-ordinating Unit (CCU) of the UN Statistical Office and the UN specialized agencies, the regional team will assist in the mobilization of technical and financial resources for the implementation of national programmes.

N. OTHER BUSINESS

85. In connexion with participation at the seminar on household surveys scheduled for 21-30 September 1981 with funds provided by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany, it was explained that participants to such meetings were invited in their individual capacities after informal contacts with national statistical offices. This ensured proper representation of national statistical offices at the level of survey director or his deputy.

86. The Group stressed the importance of circulating documentation well in advance so as to enable participants to consult their colleagues before attending meetings. Delay in receiving documents in French was deplored. A participant suggested that if the French document was not available in time, at least the English version should be circulated to all participants.

87. In respect of training provided at STPA centres referred to in the work programme, a participant referred to the fact that the quota system in operation at some of the centres made it difficult for officers of the central statistical offices to benefit from such training. This was especially so of centres located in universities. There was the need for representation by the statistical office in the policy-making body for such centres. It was agreed that STPA centres should be persuaded to accord high priority to training requirements of National Statistical Offices.

88. Participants congratulated the secretariat on the quality of its documents but mentioned that in future in considering sample sizes and workloads the impression should not be given that these depended on the size of country but rather on the domains of study. It was pointed out that the latter was implied but future documents will make this clearer.

O. ADOPTION OF REPORT

89. The Working Group approved the report, as amended during its discussions, for transmission to the Joint Conference of African Planners, Statisticians and Demographers.